



Buzzwords ...

Postage Paid
Tauranga, NZ
Permit 486

Return address:
Box 4048
Wellington

ISSN 0114 -0795

..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

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Buzzwords No 6 March 1989



THAT *!##!* HIVE LEVY PAYMENT

With the present crop failure in many parts of the country exec recognises that a number of beekeepers may have problems in meeting their operating costs this year. One of these for all beekeepers with more than 50 hives is the annual hive levy, which provides the funds for administration of the NBA. It's perhaps unfortunate that this year's poor production corresponds with an increase in the levy to 48 cents per hive, due for payment this month.

If you find yourself in real difficulties at present, then please remember that provisions do exist for executive to allow an extension of time for payment of levies, upon written notification to the executive secretary. Section 5 of the

Hive Levy Act states that the NBA may extend the time for payment of the hive levy for such time as it sees fit.

While exec doesn't expect to be flooded with applications from destitute beekeepers, it is far better to be told directly of any problems for members than to have the levy statement ignored and then to have to follow up with costly and unpleasant legal action. It might also be good idea to get hold of a copy of the Hive Levy Act and read the conditions under which this system operates for the Association.

Allen McCaw
NBA President

INDUSTRY PLANNING

Don't forget this is your last chance to have an input to the summit conference at Flock House. On the 13th of March the executive is meeting with representatives of all the special-interest groups of the industry.

If you have constructive suggestions about how your industry should go forward into the 1990s, contact an executive member or write to Box 4048, Wellington.

CONFERENCE 1989

A reminder again from the Otago branch of this year's annual conference in Dunedin - it's from 24-27 July at the Pacific Park Motor Hotel. The room rate has been frozen at \$66 for three people, and larger motel-type units are available. Make bookings direct with the hotel, or for more details contact the Otago branch secretary, Neil Walker, RD2, Milton.

Otago are determined to make this a conference to remember, with a pre-conference seminar on the theme "Towards the 1990s", special interest group meetings and social activities on the programme. Looking forward to meeting you there!



OVERDUE STATEMENTS ARE EXPENSIVE

Final reminders are now being sent to beekeepers who haven't supplied MAF with a hive inspection statement for last year. No, I know you wouldn't be in this category - the warning's for "the other bloke".

With all the whinging about the cost of operating an apiary register, it's disappointing that there hasn't been a marked improvement in the return rate this year. For instance, in one apiary district, by the end of January (two months after the final return date) a staggering 37% of beekeepers hadn't put in their statements.

Talk to someone in a professional office about how much they reckon it costs to generate and post a letter. The answers would vary, but would be several dollars each (taking into account staff time, overheads and material costs). At say \$5 each the 560 reminders for the district I've mentioned would chew through over \$2,500 just like that.

One way or another you will be paying for this in future, so how about doing yourself a favour and getting the 1988 return in now, and this year's when it's due.

BREAKTHROUGH ON 1080 POISONING

Possum poisoning with 1080 has a significant effect on some beekeepers, with hives having to be moved out of areas when toxic bait is laid. This might be coming to an end, as a result of work carried out at MAF Ruakura by Dr Mark Goodwin and Anton ten Houten.

They carried out trials to determine why 1080 is causing honey bee poisonings, and to investigate possible solutions to the problem. From the results of the trials we know that the problems of large-scale 1080 poisoning of bees and the incorporation of 1080 in honey result from the delayed toxicity of 1080. This allows foragers to make repeated trips to the toxic baits and other foragers to be recruited.

The problem is aggravated by using pre-baits which allow large numbers of foragers to become conditioned to visiting the bait stations before the poison baits are laid. This increases the possibility that the 1080 baits will be found and worked by large numbers of bees.

Trials with black strap molasses have indicated that adding it to 1080 jam baits will not affect the attractiveness of the baits to opossums. However, honey bees find molasses repellent so that the addition of 20% molasses to the pre-baits and 1080 jam baits should reduce, or completely eliminate, the incidence of 1080 poisoning of bees and the incorporation of 1080 in honey. As molasses is considerably cheaper than the jam base its addition during the manufacture of the baits shouldn't involve any extra costs.

Further trials are being conducted to test molasses-jam baits and to attempt to isolate the component causing molasses to be repellent to honey bees. Pest destruction officials have indicated that adding molasses to the baits shouldn't cause any other problems, so we should see safe baits being used soon.

This experimental work was being funded by MAF and the beekeeping industry trust funds, and shows how investment in research can have rapid and obvious benefits to our industry.

Viper's bugloss honey from MAF's Tara Hills beekeeping project is now being enjoyed by MPs on the breakfast tables at Bellamy's.

ONE YEAR TO GO

In only one year's time, Africanized honey bees will be in the United States.

Predictions of the bee's northward migration have been very accurate so far, and the pundits are suggesting that the AHB will cross the Mexican-US border in the northern spring of 1990. That might sound a way off yet, but it's only a year away.

If these reports are correct, the AHB will probably make southern California by the summer of 1994. There continue to be reports of AHB arriving at US ports. The most recent find was a swarm arriving in Alabama.

HONEY IN, THEN OUT OF TRADE WAR

Last month I reported that honey had become caught up in the trade war between the US and EC, over the question of hormone-fed beef.

The latest news is that honey has been dropped from the list of products which the EC will be slapping 100% duty onto. So we can relax, and let them have their trade war without us.

MORE PUBLICITY

The current state of beekeepers is getting a good airing at the moment. Northland beekeepers had a slot on the local TV news programme, while newspapers in the Bay of Plenty and South Canterbury have carried stories on the low honey crop. Rural Report has been covering this issue, too. Remember that if you want publicity it won't find you - you'll have to go out and get it.

BUZZ OFF TO A FIELD DAY

Why not commiserate with fellow beekeepers over your non-existent honey crop, by going to your branch's next field day? These events are well organised and well attended, so get yourself along for a good day's programme.

The Waikato branch's next field day is on Saturday 18 March, starting at 11am. It's at Brian Clement's honey house in Kihikihi - if you're not sure where Brian's place is don't worry, just find Kihikihi and the honey house will find itself.

And South Canterbury branch are having a field day too.

When: Saturday 1 April 1989. (Honest - it was the only day available)
here: NZ Beeswax Processors, Orari, South Canterbury.

What about: "Helping your business to survive in crises"

The programme includes a computer demonstration, NBA, MAF & DSIR speakers, Pest Destruction Board rep, beekeeping discussion and a demonstration of the wax processing plant, followed by BBQ and social hour afterwards. A good day is assured for all.

THE RAW FACTS ABOUT SUGAR

For the first time in over a hundred years, the New Zealand sugar industry is under pressure to protect, re-assess and re-market its product. Emerging from a regulated trading environment is never easy, and the sugar industry experience has been no exception.

For more than 100 years, the New Zealand consumer's perception of sugar has been, at the very least, low-key. With only one brand available, this potentially profitable product has been relegated to the ranks of "uninteresting but necessary

food item". It lacked product appeal and had come under considerable criticism as a food.

Sugar has been held responsible for conditions such as obesity, diabetes and tooth decay to mention a few, but its multiple uses have been markedly underpromoted. There has been an upsurge in the use of artificial sweeteners and manufacturers internationally have been claiming that their products can successfully imitate natural sugar.

New Zealand Sugar, a subsidiary of Australia's CSR Ltd, is now exposed to the type of competition deregulation brings about, both locally and internationally. The world sugar market has proved to be very volatile, with unpredictable extremes in price. In such a price war a positive product image is vital. For the first time in over a century, New Zealand Sugar has launched into national retail advertising as well as an extensive sugar promotional campaign. Included in the campaign material are recipes showing the diversity of sugar and brochures presenting a factual guideline to the New Zealand sugar industry covering some important issues, predominantly "nutritional-related".



The television campaign in 1987 had clear messages:

1. That sugar has undergone very little processing and is an entirely natural product.
2. That sugar is part of a well-balanced diet; the key being moderation in all foods.
3. That sugar has a superior taste over other sweeteners.
4. That sugar is actually not fattening with only 16 calories per teaspoon.

Research done in 1987, since the sugar promotional campaign took place, reflected a positive move in consumer's attitude to sugar. In total 83% of people feel comfortable about the product.

In 1984, 23% of people had a positive attitude towards sugar, as opposed to 37% now reflecting a positive response to its new "natural image". There has been a marked decrease in the number of people with a negative attitude to the product - from 22% down to 17%. Significant also has been an increase in the preference for sugar over artificial sweeteners.

Honey wasn't mentioned in this research, but I'm sure you've all seen the "sugar is natural" ads and wondered about their effect on honey sales.

(Item adapted from *Grocers' Review*, October 1988)

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES ACT - YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Did you know? ... It is an offence to supply an amount smaller than promised. The statement "net weight when packed" can only be used on goods which gain or lose moisture, such as salt. And if you pre-pack goods, you must make provision for any weight loss caused by dehydration. It's also an offence to incorrectly state the weight, measurement or amount of a product. If you're caught, the penalties can be stiff - up to \$5,000 in fact, plus having to make up any shortfall.

HOBBYIST CLUBS

The Bay of Plenty beekeeping club got off to a very successful start late last year, with speakers, demonstrations of equipment, raffles and book sales. The contact is George Floyd on (075) 440 698.

The Dunedin Beekeepers Club has its own hives for practical demonstrations, hires beekeeping videos occasionally from the NBA library, and once a year visits a commercial beekeeper. The secretary is Dorothy Lamsdale, 13 Durham Street, Dunedin.



PRACTICAL BEEKEEPING

QUEENS TO THE USA

The saga of queen exports to the US is moving on, with all the speed of a midday TV soap.

The story so far (as they say). Ever since the "acarine mite" scare which prompted the US Bee Act of 1922 to be chiselled into stone, that country has imported queens only from Canada.

For the past 10 years MAF in New Zealand has been beavering away to get access to this market. Remember Dr Shimanuki's visit here some years ago? MAF paid for Dr Shimanuki to come to New Zealand and study our bee disease situation and control programme. He was most impressed with what he saw. Many of his recommendations were implemented, such as appointing a full-time bee pathologist.

MAF has also coordinated the shipping of trial queens and packages provided by the industry to the USDA at Beltsville, for evaluation and disease checking.

Our embassy in Washington DC has put a lot of effort into the negotiations too. When the USDA rewrote import conditions in 1984 to allow importation from countries other than Canada we tried hard to gain the same importation

status as Canada, but the authorities wouldn't budge. Murray Reid of MAF visited Canada and the US in late 1986 to negotiate around this impasse.

The USDA has advised our embassy in Washington that the final clearance won't be in place for the 1989 season. In fact the USDA is still collecting information on the impact of the changed policy on US agriculture. This will presumably include input from US queen producers who are unlikely to be supportive. At this rate Africanized queens will be in the US before ones from New Zealand.

One New Zealand exporter advertized in the *American Bee Journal* and got a good response. US beekeepers are keen to get New Zealand bees, and some are planning visits here soon. It is hoped that they will speed up the process of gazetting approval for our imports. MAF has always believed that the earlier US market is the best for our producers.

GORSE MITES GRIND TO HALT

Remember learning about the birds and the bees - you know behind the bike sheds? Well it seems that the gorse mite project has come unstuck because of a pretty basic problem - to mate, the mites need both males and females.

No females were produced by the groups of mites which were released in Canterbury this summer. Because the mites live for just two months, the released colonies quickly died out.

Richard Hill, the scientist in charge of the DSIR project, said the fault probably lay with a disease the mites developed while in quarantine. A cure was easily found and when the progeny of the diseased mites were later released they appeared healthy.

When the mites were matured, though, it was found they were all males. Dr Hill said the diseased males were probably sterilized. Unfertilised eggs laid by the mites became male while those which were fertilised developed as females.

The project had probably been delayed by two months, he said.

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Published by the National Beekeepers' Association of New Zealand, PO Box 4048, Wellington.

Production by Andrew Matheson (MAF, Tauranga) and Nick Wallingford.

The views expressed in *Buzzwords* are not necessarily those of the National Beekeepers' Association nor of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.